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FROM THE VOICE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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VOL. 3 NO. 126 | 44 YEARS OF SERVICE | JUNE 27, 2007

Number of Blacks Enlisting in the Military Drops

The number of blacks joining the military has plunged by more than one-third since the Afghanistan and Iraq wars began. Other job prospects are soaring and relatives of potential recruits increasingly are discouraging them from joining the armed services. According to data obtained by The Associated Press, the decline covers all four military services for active duty recruits. The drop is even more dramatic when National Guard and Reserve recruiting is included. The findings reflect the growing unpopularity of the wars, particularly among family members and other adults who exert influence over high school and college students considering the military as a place to serve their country, further their education or build a career. Walking past the Army recruiting station in downtown Washington, D.C., this past week, Sean Glover said he has done all he can to talk black relatives out of joining the military."I don't think it's a good time. I don't support the government's efforts here and abroad," said Glover, 36. "There's other ways you can pay for college. There's other ways you can get your life together. Joining the Army, the military, comes at a very high price." The message comes as no surprise to the Pentagon. At the Defense Department, efforts are under way to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps so the country can better wage what the military believes will be a long battle against terrorism. "The global war on terror has taken its toll, no question," said Curt Gilroy, the Pentagon's director of accession policy, in an Associated Press interview. Marine Commandant Gen. James T. Conway agreed that the bloodshed in Iraq — where more than 3,540 U.S. troops have died - is the biggest deterrent for prospective recruits. "The daily death toll that comes out is, I think, causing people who are the influencers of young men and women in America to take a second look," he said. "So I think that's probably the single most dominant feature." According to Pentagon data, there were nearly 51,500 new black recruits for active duty and reserves in 2001. That number fell to less than 32,000 in 2006, a 38 percent decline. When only active duty troops are counted, the number of black recruits went from more than 31,000 in 2002 to about 23,600 in 2006, almost one-quarter fewer. The decline is particularly stark for the Army. Blacks represented about 23 percent of the active Army's enlisted recruits in 2000, but 12.4 percent in 2006. The decline in black recruits overall has been offset partly by an increase in Hispanic recruits and those who classify themselves as other races or nationalities. This category could include people who consider themselves Portuguese, or of other European descent that are not covered by the main categories of white, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan, black or Hispanic. The active duty services largely have met recruiting targets in the past two years, while the Army, Army National Guard and Air National Guard fell short of their goals last month. Sgt. Terry Wright, an Army recruiter in Tampa, Fla. said young people in the black community have more education and job opportunities now than when he joined the service 14 years ago. "I go to high schools every day, and for the most part it strikes me how many of them are serious about going to college," said Wright, 32.

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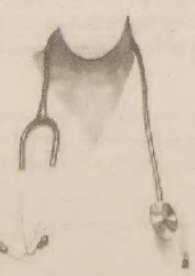

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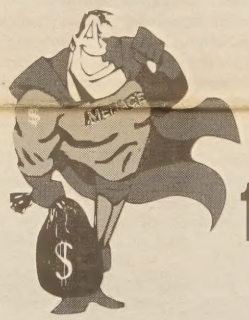

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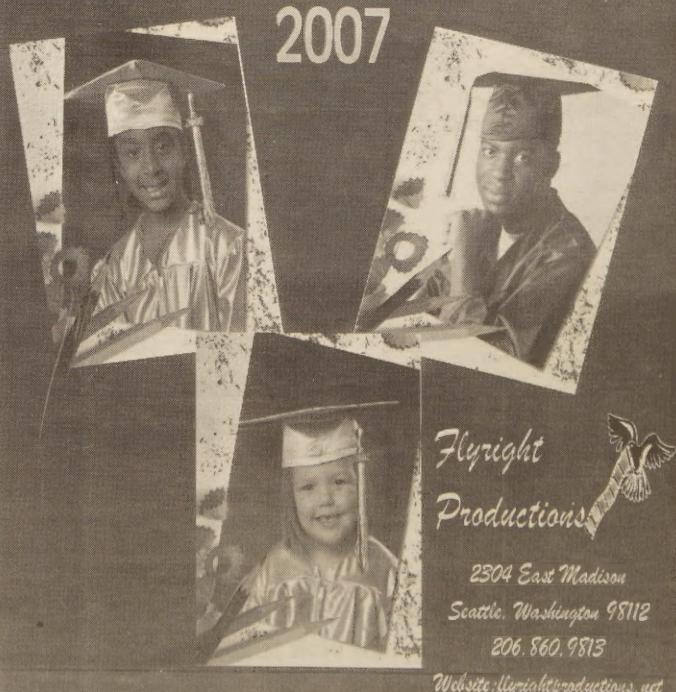

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Number of Blacks Enlisting in the Military Drops

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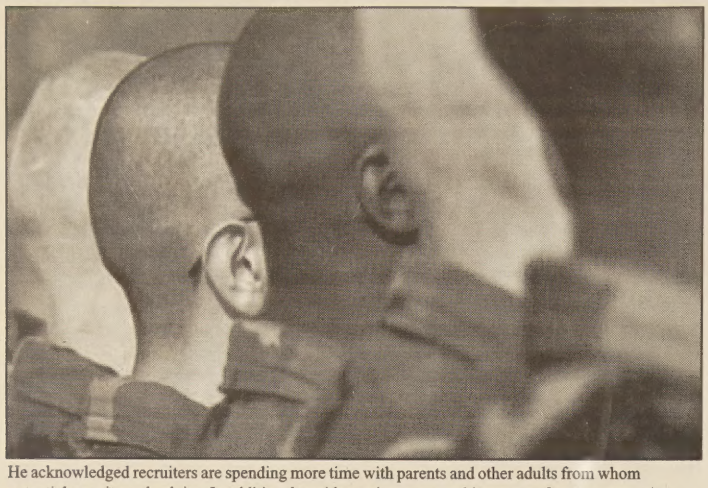
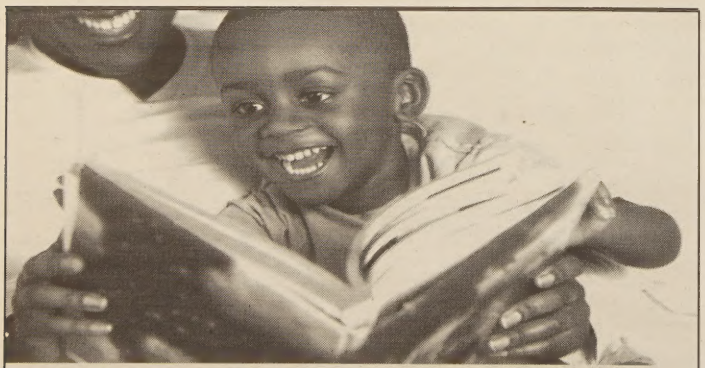


He acknowledged recruiters are spending more time with parents and other adults from whom potential recruits seek advice. In addition, he said recruiters are speaking more often to community and ethnic groups to encourage military service. According to Conway, the Marine commandant, Marine recruiters "used to spend four hours with the young recruit and four hours with those people that we would call the influencers: the parents, the pastors, the coaches, the teachers." Now, he said, they spend four hours with recruits and 14 hours with influencers. Gilroy, the Pentagon official, said the improving economy is giving potential recruits more opportunities for better paying jobs outside the military. But he said the growing dissatisfaction with the war among black political and community leaders, as well as parents and teachers, is a major factor, too. "The influencers of these youth have a larger effect on African-Americans," Gilroy said. "Some have argued that, because of the makeup of African-American families and the relatively more significant roles (the families) play, moms have a greater influence on their families. And we know that moms, in general, do not support the war." Citing high-profile black leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, Gilroy said, "We hear greater criticism of this administration's policies and greater concerns about the effects of the war." He said it is up to the country's leaders, particularly members of Congress who have served in the military to "talk about the nobility of service." With detailed, color-coded graphs, the military can chart the erosion in support for the war among the adults who surround recruits of all ethnicities.

A green line denoting the percentage of grandparents likely to recommend military service shows the steepest drop - from a high of 56 percent in mid-2004 to 34 percent last fall. Support is lowest among mothers. At the start of the war, 36 percent of moms would recommend military service; by last fall, it was 25 percent. Sgt. Carlos Alvarez, a recruiting station commander in Tampa, Fla., said many minorities have strong family ties and winning over parents, grandparents and other relatives is critical when talking to potential recruits. "If you don't have a good relationship with the parents, you're not going to go anywhere," he said. "The kid might want to do it, but it's all about mom and dad." Alvarez said it is not just high school students who turn to their parents for approval. Potential recruits in their late 20s will tell him, "I need to speak to my mom." Conway said Marine recruiters need to "pump up the volume a little bit in terms of their recruiting efforts."

The military services, meanwhile, have created Internet sites that offer videos, downloads, interest tests and special pages for parents. "You Made Them Strong. We'll Make Them Army Strong," says the headline on the Army's Web site for parents. It includes details on salaries, benefits, bonuses, education and training as well as stories about how a recruit made her decision to join and how one soldier deployed to war.

The Navy, Air Force and Marine recruiting sites offer similar information, often also in Spanish. Also available are personal stories and videos of service members. "I've tasked our recruiters with ensuring that our minority percentages stay strong," Conway said. "We just want to make sure that we continue to look like America in the Marine Corps." At the same time, the military is opening the door to many recruits it has not welcomed in the past. That includes people who are a bit older; who score lower on aptitude tests; and who have medical conditions such as asthma or attention deficit disorders that can be controlled better now with medicine. The Army, for example, increased its age limit for recruits from 35 to 42. But the key, Gilroy said, is to continue to shore up recruiting budgets, particularly for the Army and Marine Corps, who are bearing the brunt of the service on the wars' front lines. "Recruiting is at the heart of the volunteer force," said Gilroy. "If we don't get recruiting right, nothing else matters."



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The Paradigm Institute, based in San Antonio, Texas is reaching out to African American families nationwide to help them become homeowners.
The institute is offering free consultations on how to purchase a home, how to understand different loans, and how to avoid becoming a victim of predatory lending. "Mortgage fraud is the fastest growing white collar crime in this country," says James Turner, founder and president of the Institute. "African Americans make up a lot of the victims, and they need to be educated on the matter."Turner is a retired educator and a former city legislator. He also served five years as the past President and Chairman of the Board for a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) City Housing Authority in Michigan. In addition to helping people responsibly own homes, his Institute also recruits individuals who want to become work-at-home mortgage brokers, mortgage consultants, and/or loan officers. "Such a career allows individuals to become entrepreneurs and community activists as they too can help to educate people about mortgage fraud," Turners says. For more information, interested ones should call (888) 785-9635 for a free consultation or visit www.paradigminstitute.org

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- a fair procedure for handling workplace grievances

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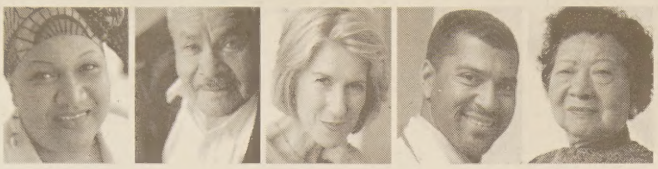

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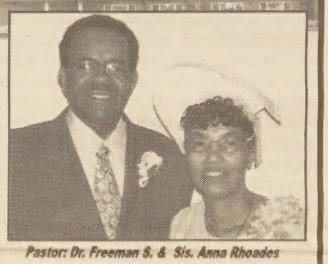

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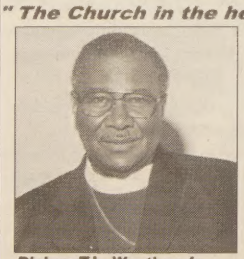

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Honoring Black Men Through Good Judgments

Why Wait For A New Prostate Cancer Treatment In The Face Of An Epidemic?

Thomas A. Farrington

Mary S. Harris, PhD, founder and president of Journey to Wellness, recently wrote the article*, "Honoring Black Men With Good Science." This was in response to my testimony before a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory committee convened to consider the approval of Provenge, an immunotherapy vaccine treatment for prostate cancer. Had it been approved by the FDA, Provenge would have become the first such treatment for any type of cancer, signaling a new era in cancer treatments. FDA's own advisory committee (experts selected by the FDA) recommended approval but the FDA did not follow this recommendation and chose not to grant immediate approval. Rarely does the FDA choose not to follow the recommendation of its advisory committees on drug approvals. Subsequent to the FDA's decision I wrote an article* where I posed this question - "Did the FDA turn its back on black men with non-approval of first ever prostate cancer vaccine?"Dr. Harris' article echoes the FDA's position of using "good science" as the reason for its Provenge decision. However, this statement appears on the FDA's own approval process documentation - "At the heart of all FDA's medical product evaluation decisions is a judgment about whether a new product's benefits to users will outweigh its risks. No regulated product is totally risk-free, so these judgments are important." Relative to Provenge, Dr. Harris is the only person that I have noted who seriously questions the drug's safety. The advisory committee voted 17 to 0 that the drug was safe. For efficacy (drug effectiveness) the vote was a positive 13 to 4, and even the four negative voters agreed that there were no significant safety issues. In addition I have not seen anything written by any FDA official denying the safety of Provenge. In fact, Provenge is a safe drug with minor side effects (little or no known risks) targeting terminally ill prostate cancer patients, many of whom have no treatment options available to them. I am a seven year prostate cancer survivor, who lost my father and both grandfathers to this ugly disease, and I view treatment options from a different perspective than Dr. Harris. Chemotherapy with all of its bad side effects is the only treatment available today for terminally ill prostate cancer patients. Even this was not an option for my father because of other health issues. This is true for many men, and others who simply choose to face death as opposed to undergoing chemotherapy treatments due to its severe side effects. There are millions of prostate cancer survivors who live in fear of their next PSA test, which most of us take every six months. We know that the slightest increase could mean a cancer recurrence and another round of treatments with a further erosion of our quality of life. We hope and pray for treatments that can extend our lives without taking away our quality of life. Provenge demonstrated through clinical trials that it might be the answer to our prayers, and patients want this treatment available as one of their options now. Dr. Harris, in a statement similar to one in the Wall Street Journal attributed to Dr. Howard Scher, one of the most outspoken Provenge critics on the FDA advisory committee, urges against letting "emotion" take a back seat to good science. If the fears and hopes of prostate cancer patients are the emotions being referred to, then we are guilty of being emotional about living. However, we will not apologize for these emotions. Prostate cancer patients were invited to present before the FDA advisory committee because of the human factors involved in the FDA judgments to approve or not. The committee understood these human factors when voting to recommend approval. The science purists would have the human factors totally eliminated. If the FDA's charter was simply to consider only the scientific data without making judgments, then we could replace the entire FDA drug approval process with a cheap PC and save the taxpayers lots of money. The FDA Provenge decision has mobilized the prostate cancer patient community unlike no other time in our history. You ask why? Because we believe the FDA ignored both strong scientific data, and the human factor in making its final judgment on a safe drug. This is the wrong judgment call for the wrong reasons, adversely impacting all prostate cancer patients, especially Black men who suffer a 150% higher mortality rate than other men. In a meeting with the FDA Commissioner, patient advocacy leaders and leading medical doctors, we let the Commissioner know that we clearly understood the FDA was not obligated to follow the advice of its advisory committee. However, we emphasized our belief that the final FDA decision was flawed and corrupted through an unprecedented public politicizing of the approval process by participants on the advisory committee who were outvoted. These parties also had appearances of conflicts of interests. Simply put, we question whether "good science" is a camouflage for what really happened, and we are gravely concerned about being denied access to a safe treatment option because of a flawed approval process. In our opinion the FDA's advisory committee (not the FDA properly) weighed the scientific data and Provenge's benefits against its risks and made the right judgment call. I find it interesting that Dr. Harris, a black woman, has stepped into the heated Provenge debate siding with the FDA citing "good science." So-called "scientific findings," left unchecked through good judgments, were reasons used for dehumanizing blacks during an ugly part of this country's history. Most all scientific data requires good judgment to both protect and to help. For drug approval we must always consider the human factors as stated in the FDA's own guidelines. To err on the side of science for Provenge means that 27,000 men a year will die without access to a safe drug as a treatment option. I asked the FDA to consider the urgent needs of African American men who are in the midst of a prostate cancer epidemic during its approval process, and to value our lives as it would value others in such a crisis. For the FDA not to make such a consideration would clearly seem to devalue our lives. Dr. Harris terms my request as "racial positioning," and with her being in lockstep with the FDA I have to wonder if this reflects the agency's view as well. For the record, this is advocating on behalf of the most severely impacted of all prostate cancer patients. Also, strangely, Dr. Harris chose to ignore the good scientific data supporting Provenge's safety as a basis of her support for the FDA decision.

Shauna Applin, ARNP

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COMMUNITY HEALTH Care

Campaign Seeks Help For Millions Of Children Without Health Insurance
African-American Children More Likely To Be Uninsured

There are now nearly 45 million Americans without health insurance, including nine million children-more than the total number of kids enrolled in the first and second grades in U.S. public schools. For African-American children, the numbers are even more startling. African-American kids are nearly twice as likely to be uninsured than white children, with nearly one in eight African-American kids remaining uninsured.

The numbers could be even higher. For the past 10 years, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, has provided health coverage to all children whose parents cannot afford coverage or who are not offered health insurance through their jobs. Through the program, millions of children have access to a doctor when they are sick and get the health care that they need to stay healthy. This year, SCHIP must be reauthorized by Congress in order to continue. The current funding levels for these state programs-set in 1997-are not adequate to keep up with the growing numbers of uninsured kids, so it will take an increase in federal funding just to cover kids currently enrolled in these programs, with more money needed to help the millions more uninsured children.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is focusing its Cover the Uninsured campaign in 2007 on the need for children to have health insurance. Now in its fifth year, the campaign is the largest mobilization in history to shine a national spotlight on the need to secure health coverage for all Americans. The Foundation and the broad network of business owners, union members, teachers, students, consumers, doctors, nurses, faith leaders and others involved in this campaign are planning activities that highlight the success of SCHIP, demonstrate the ongoing need for ensuring that children have health coverage and enroll eligible families in insurance programs.

"The country's most successful effort to cover kids is in danger unless Congress and the president act decisively to reauthorize and expand SCHIP," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "If they fail to renew and adequately fund the program, they will be abandoning millions of uninsured children, and the nation will lose an important opportunity to make further progress in covering the uninsured."

The centerpiece of the effort is Cover the Uninsured Week, to be held April 23-29, 2007. Activities during the Week will include press conferences, enrollment activities, community forums, seminars for small businesses, educational events on campuses, faith-based activities and more.

"Covering children is an important first step in covering all Americans, and SCHIP is critical to achieving that goal," said Lavizzo-Mourey. "There has never been a more important time for us to come together and support federal efforts to provide health coverage to children. Congress must properly fund SCHIP and make America's uninsured their top priority."

In addition to pushing for SCHIP reauthorization and expansion, organizations nationwide will host events to enroll eligible children in existing public programs, such as SCHIP and Medicaid.

More information about the campaign and Cover the Uninsured Week activities is available at www.CoverTheUninsured.org.

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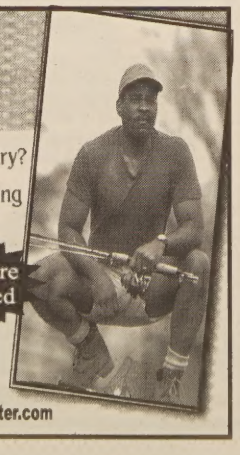

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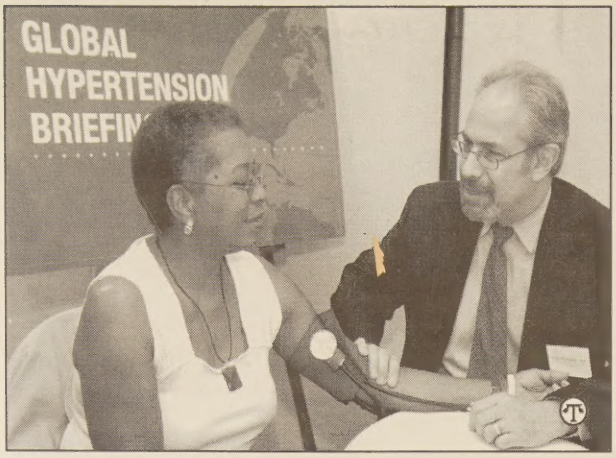
High Blood Pressure: A Worldwide Epidemic



High blood pressure affects an estimated 72 million Americans and more than 1 billion people worldwide. The good news is that if the condition is properly controlled, the incidence of major health problems-including stroke, heart attack and heart failure-can be greatly reduced. Unfortunately, only half of Americans who are being treated for high blood pressure follow their treatment regimens. To help raise awareness of the risks of high blood pressure, as well as the benefits of proper care, many of the leading medical groups have signed on to a new report that details the seriousness of the condition. The outcome of a research project conducted at the London School of Economics, the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, and the State University of New York Downstate Medical College, the report-"High Blood Pressure and Health Policy: Where We Are and Where We Need to Go Next"-acts as a global call to action examining the serious medical, economic and human health consequences of unchecked high blood pressure. According to the report, 70 percent of people with high blood pressure do not have the condition under control, putting them at greater risk for heart disease, damaged kidneys, blurred vision and even dementia. The report predicts significantly higher rates of disability and death in the U.S. and around the world if efforts to prevent and manage hypertension are not improved. Uncontrolled high blood pressure increases the risk of cardiovascular events two- to threefold. Of special concern are the rising prevalence rates among older women, ethnic minorities and even teens. The latest data include the following:

• More American women have high blood pressure than men-39 million versus 33 million.

• The condition is two to three times more common in women taking oral contraceptives.

• African Americans are the most likely to develop high blood pressure and suffer from it earlier and more severely than any other racial or ethnic group. Compared with about 30 percent of whites, the overall rate among black adults is 41.4 percent and 44 percent among black women.

While high blood pressure is a "silent" condition, it causes damage with every beat of the heart. The report advocates more systematic health policies and new programs conducted by schools and community organizations to raise awareness of the lifestyle factors directly linked with high blood pressure: obesity, lack of physical activity, smoking, excessive sodium intake and overconsumption of alcohol. The report also advocates that all adults be regularly screened for high blood pressure when they visit their physician for other reasons.
Rep. Donna Christensen (D-VI) got her blood pressure checked and called for a congressional hearing about high blood pressure after the release of the new global report.

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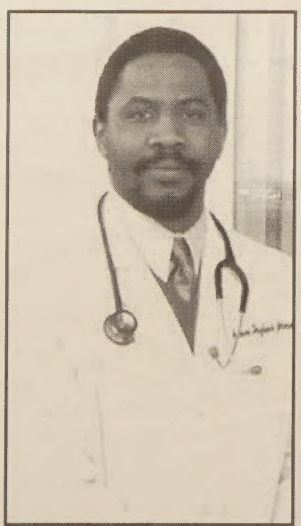
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Marc Swanson, *Fits and Starts*, 2004. Crystals, polyurethane foam, and adhesive. Collection of DePauw University, Gift of the Butler Family Foundation. Image courtesy the artist and Bellwether Gallery, New York. Copyright Marc Swanson, 2004. Local support is generously provided Click! Network, Tacoma Power. This exhibition is organized by Tacoma Art Museum.
EVERYTHING LASTS FOREVER

Amended fireworks ordinance goes into effect Monday, June 25

Beginning Monday, June 25, Tacoma 's fireworks ban will be treated as a civil infraction with a $257 fine, rather than a misdemeanor resulting in jail time. Most fireworks violations are a class 2 civil infraction and can result in a $257 fine – citizens using fireworks are still subject to arrest for other charges (i.e. arson, reckless burning, assault). Fireworks are permissible within city limits only when a permit has been issued for a sanctioned public event. Citizens wanting to report fireworks violations should call (253) 798-4722. If the fireworks violation appears to put people or property in immediate danger, call 911. Additional police officers will be dedicated to enforcing the new fireworks ban from June 28 through July 6. For more information about fireworks safety, burn prevention and local Fourth of July events, visit www.cityoftacoma.org or call the Tacoma Fire Prevention and Preparedness Bureau at (253) 591-5740.

Joint City Council and Joint Municipal Action Committee study session

Members of the City Council and the Joint Municipal Action Committee are scheduled June 26 to receive a debriefing and a review the 18-month action plan for the Get Smart Tacoma Community Summit which was held in early May. Immediately following the joint study session, members of the City Council are scheduled to receive a review of the draft documents for the Commute Trip Reduction Plan (CTR) and the Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC) program. Additionally, the members of City Council will discuss two proposed health care related resolutions and the additional information regarding the Planned Residential Development code amendments.

The Council will not take public comment during the noon study session in the Tacoma Municipal Building North, Room 16. CityPost (Channel 21 on Click!, Channel 77 on Comcast) will broadcast the audio portion of the session live. Replays of the study session audio may be heard Wednesdays at 7 p.m. on CityPost (Channel 21 on Click!, Channel 77 on Comcast). On-demand audio archives are available on the Web within 24 hours of the meeting at www.tvtacoma.com.

Planned Residential Development Districts public hearing June 26

The City Council will conduct a public hearing on June 26 at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers located on First Floor, 747 Market Street, regarding the recommendations of the Planning Commission associated with the Planned Residential Development (PRD) District moratorium. The Planning Commission's proposed amendments were developed in response to the emergency moratorium on PRD development adopted by the City Council in January. Additional information is available at www.cityoftacoma.org/planning.

First reading scheduled for Planned Residential Development Districts ordinance

Members of the City Council are scheduled June 26 to hear the first reading of an ordinance that would amend the Municipal Code relating to the Land Use Permit Procedures and Zoning for Planned Residential Development Districts.

Open auditions underway for the 2008 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

The Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Committee will hold open auditions for the January 14, 2008 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration event at the Beacon Senior Center (415 South 13th Street) this summer. Auditions are open to all ages and ethnic groups. The celebration committee is seeking talent in the following areas: vocalists, dancers, recitals, groups, spoken word, dramatic interpretation and instrumentals. All performers and performances must follow the theme "Women of the Movement – Give Them a Standing Ovation." Auditions will be held from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on July 14, August 18, and September 22, 2007. For more information, contact Jackie Wilson at (253) 536-2298, Ellen Smith at (253) 905-9868, Genie Jefferson at (253) 228-4227 or Gary Pinkney at (253) 376-8364.

City offices closed July 4; no garbage, recycling or yard waste collection

City of Tacoma administrative offices will close on July 4, in recognition of the Independence Day holiday. There will be no garbage, recycling or yard waste pickup on July 4 – collection will be one day late for the rest of the week. For example, customers whose collection day is normally on Wednesday will have a Thursday pickup. Thursday customers will have collection on Friday and so on. The City of Tacoma 's landfill, recycling center and household hazardous waste facility will also be closed July 4. Customers with solid waste related questions can call (253) 591-5543.

City Council standing committee meetings this week

Public Safety & Human Services Committee
June 28, 5 p.m. in Tacoma Municipal Building , 747 Market St. , Room 248

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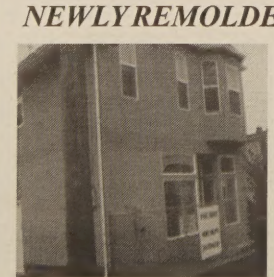

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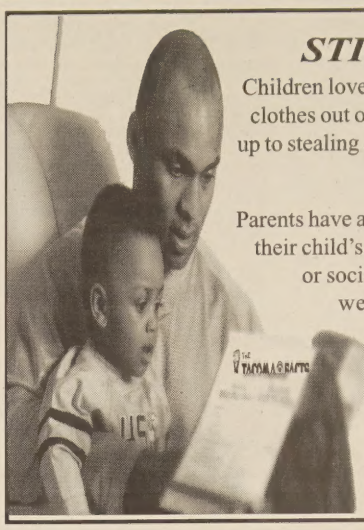

STICK TO THE FACTS

Children love to imitate their parents-from pulling clothes out of mommy's closet and playing dress-up to stealing daddy's shaving cream and smearing it all over their face.

Parents have an important responsibility in guiding their child's development, whether academically or socially, to help nurture him or her into a well-rounded person. An easy way parents can help young ones be more prepared for school and life is through reading *THE FACTS NEWSPAPER* to your children every week .... *It's A Fact*

City of Tacoma employees, family members exhibit artistic talents

The talents of City of Tacoma employees and their families will grace the public spaces of Tacoma Municipal Building , 747 Market St. , and Tacoma Public Utilities Headquarters, 3628 S. 35th St. , from July 2 to August 21. This exhibit, sponsored by The National Arts Program® and the Tacoma Arts Commission, includes 145 artworks in a variety of media. The exhibit is free and open to the public during normal business hours.

The National Arts Program provides an uninhibited opportunity for people to present their talents, at any level, in a public exhibition, free to artists and the public. By removing obstacles to artistic expression, the program seeks to showcase individual talent and increase the self-confidence of its participants. This is the second year that the City of Tacoma has participated in this program.

"This program allows employees to share a side of them they may not get to in the daily grind." said Amy McBride, City of Tacoma arts administrator. "This exhibit brings together people from every department and classification. Art is a great equalizer."

A reception and awards ceremony will be held at the Pantages Theater lobby on July 26 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. with the awards presentation beginning at 5:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

All entries will be judged by three members of the Tacoma Arts Commission in the categories of amateur, intermediate, professional, youth under 12, and youth 12 to 18. A $2,400 prize will be awarded.

The National Arts Program exhibit is sponsored and funded by The National Arts Program Foundation of Malvern, Pa. , in support and cooperation with the City of Tacoma 's Community and Economic Development Department.

To learn more about The National Arts Program, please visit www.nationalartsprogram.org.

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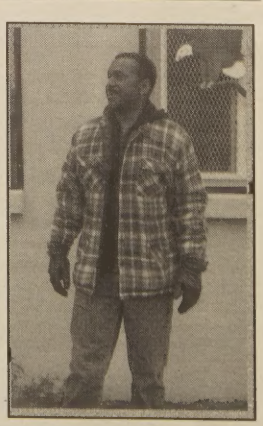

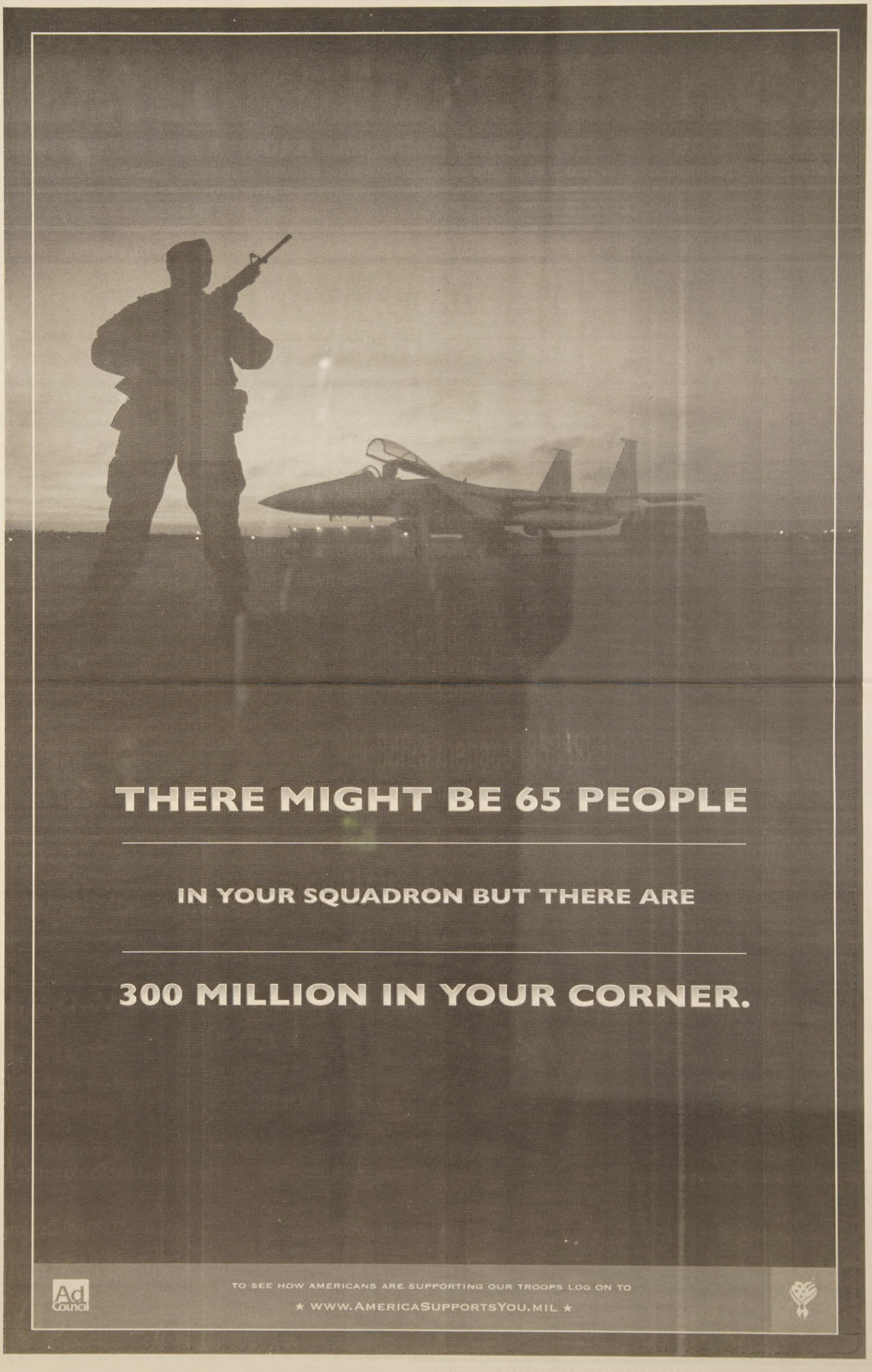
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